Father Goose

Ralph and David and their father and I were walking in the field where two geese had their nest. The boys, who were great friends of our geese, had asked to come and visit them while the mather geese were sitting on the eggs. This is something they had never seen before. They wanted to see for themselves just how the mother goose brings the goslings into the world.

David became interested in the pair we call Mr. Orchard Honker and Mrs. Orchard Honker. I was answering his questions when suddenly I heard a loud, sharp "honk honk honk keonk!" Before I could stop him, the other Father Goose, whose name is Mr. Berrypatch Honker, had dashed at Ralph and knocked him down. As Ralph's father and I got there, Mr. Berrypatch had just mounted Ralph's back, taken hold of the frightened boys ear and, while holding the ear firmly with his beak, began to beat them strongly with his wings.

~~Thexwhalexthingxtookxonlyxx~~ I took hold of Mr. Berrypatch's neck - this is the proper way to grasp a goose - and pulled him from Ralph's back. I held the angry goose as far away from my body as I could because his wings are very, very strong. Nature made them strong because this kind of goose ~~flys~~ flies many many miles without stopping. It is known as the Canadian Goose. It is also called the "honker", and people sometimes call them simply "wild geese", although there are other kinds of wild geese.

Ralph's father helped Ralph from the ground. I asked them to walk away from Mrs. Berrypatch's nest. When they were far enough away I put Mr. Berrypatch back on the ground.

He was quite angry and honked loudly. He tried to bite me and to beat me with his wings. I kept him away with the side of my heavy shoe and slowly backed away from his wife's nest. When Mr. Berrypatch was satisfied I was far enough away, he turned his back on me, raised his long black neck almost straight up into the air, pointed his head at the sky and proudly strutted toward the nest. All the time he was telling his wife "Eeeeonkk, eeeonnk, eeeonk." When he got to the nest he kept talking to his wife, telling her ~~tbl about~~ what had happened. As he talked, his voice slowly changed, and the words he used seemed a little different from the two sounds he had made. When he had attacked Ralph he had called "Honk honk Honk!" He said this in a way that geese understand. It is a warning. When Mr. Berrypatch had returned to Mrs. Berrypatch, the sounds he made ~~were intendedxtoxbexunderstood~~ ~~telling~~ told her how brave he is and how he had just saved her from danger.

Now that he was back at the nest and talking to her, he was still making ~~this~~ had the same sounds, but ~~he spoke them~~ in a different way. Gradually his voice became softer. All the while he was waving his neck over her back.

If you know and love geese as I do, and watch them carefully, you can soon learn to understand what they are saying. They do talk. They talk to each other and they talk to other forms of life, like people and cats and dogs. Back at the nest, Mr. Berrypatch was trying to comfort his wife. He did this by the way he talked and the way he acted. She was comforted. She fluffed her feathers, ~~told her husband~~ said "Unk unk eo-unk unk" and settled back to her job of hatching the eggs.

By the time I joined Ralph, David and their father ~~Theodore~~ Mr. Ward, Ralph had stopped crying and his father was wiping the tears from the boy's face.

After a minute Ralph turned his face up to me and asked "Why did he do that to me? We have always been such good friends."

This was the truth. Ralph and David, as well as many other children, had always been very good friends with all of our geese. When they visited our farm, none of the children had ever teased or hit any of the geese. The geese would eat from the hands of th children and never bit them. Ralph is the first child any of our geese ever bit. Of course, Ralph was hurt, in fact and in spirit. Above all the children, Ralph and David have been the very best friends of our geese. During the nice days of the late fall and the winter they had gone out into the fields and picked up the corn the corn-picking

machines had missed. Then the boys took the corn home. When they could not go outside both boys shelled the corn from the cob. This is hard work for boys because the grains of corn become hard as they dry and they stick tightly to the cob. Ralph and David brought many bags of corn to our geese that winter.

So you can see why Ralph was so unhappy. First his friend Mr. Berrypatch had forgotten all the nice things Ralph had done for him. And then he had actually hurt Ralph. Ralph knew he had intended no harm. He had just wandered a little closer to Mrs. Berrypatch so he could see her and what she was doing more clearly.

~~The question Ralph had asked me was a fair question.~~ Was Mr. Berrypatch no longer Ralph's friend? Had he forgotten all of Ralph's kindnesses? I knew Mr. Berrypatch was still a good fellow and that he felt he had a good reason to beat Ralph, as the goose saw it. I wasn't sure I'd be able to make Ralph see it the goose's way, but I decided to try and explain it.

~~I turned to Ralph and asked him this question:~~ "What would your daddy do if he thought something might hurt you or David, or your mother?" I asked Ralph

Ralph thought for a minutes and replied, "My daddy would stop it."

Then I asked Ralph's daddy what he would do if he ever thought something

person or some animal might hurt his family.

"Why, there is nothing I wouldn't do, "Mr. Ward replied." Part of my job as a father and as a husband is to see that nothing hurts my family."

"That's exactly the way Mr. Berrypatch felt, Ralph", I explained to my young, red-eyed friend." When Mrs. Berrypatch has made a nest and has eggs in it, she worries if anything goes near the nest. Mr. Berrypatch also worries, and if his wife frets, he gets very excited. Any other time he is your friend, but when the eggs are being incubated and when the goslings first hatch, he doesn't trust anything or anybody. He doesn't even trust me. In fact, if you look now, you will see that he and his brother, Mr. Orchard Honker, do not trust each other."

Both boys looked and sure enough, it was just as I told them. Mrs. Orchard had her nest at the top of the little hill, in the orchard, and Mrs. Berrypatch had hers at the bottom, in the berry patch. Mr. Orchard stood on guard near the bottom of the hill and wouldn't let anything near his nest. Mr. Berrypatch was never far from his nest and usually was on guard between it and the gate leading into the field.

"Do you boys understand? Mr. Ward asked his sons. "It is not that Mr. Berrypatch wants to hurt you. He thinks it is his job to keep everything away from his nest."

The boys said they did understand, but their father and I thought maybe they didn't really understand all of it. We talked it over and decided that on Saturday, when Mr. Ward didn't have to go to his office, he would bring the boys down for a visit. Each Saturday the boys could watch the geese closely. And each Saturday I would explain what had happened during the week and tell them more of the story of the geese. The boys like this arrangement very much. They jumped up and down and clapped their hands. They laughed and began to ask all sorts of questions.

Their daddy and I laughed, too. But it was time for them to go home and we told them to hold their questions until the next Saturday.

Ralph's ear had a half-inch wide scab on it when the came back. I couldn't see his ribs, but knew they must also be black and blue where Mr. Berrypatch's wings had struck. Once before ~~Onlyxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~, almost the same thing had happened to me with Mr. Orchard when I was taking pictures. He had taken hold of my shin with his strong beak and had beaten me on both legs. The bruises lasted two weeks and the lumps lasted longer.

But both boys were in high spirits, and if the beating bothered Ralph he didn't show it. They had many questions. In the week past they must have been thinking of things they'd like to know.

" et's feed them first," I suggested, and the boys agreed. They always enjoyed this, because the geese came and took bread from their hands without biting - ever.

"C'mon geese!" David called, and Ralph shouted, "Here, goosey, goosey."

No sooner had he used the word than he turned to me and asked, recalling the old nursery ryhme, "What's a gander?"

All over the farm we could hear the geese honking. They always talk over everything they do. If one decides he wants a drink of water, he goes "Honk honk honk" in a certain way, and all the geese know he wants a drink, and they all go for water. The entire flock is usually

like a large, happy family. They do things together. While they were waddling toward us, I answered Ralph's question.

"A gander is a male goose, boys, " I explained. "The female goose is called a goose. Males and females together are called "geese". The young are known as "goslings".

The geese had a wonderful time eating the bread from the boys' hands. About the time they finished eating, Ralph and David noticed that neither Mr. Orchard nor Mr. Berrypatch had come to eat. They asked me why.

"The are like soldiers on guard duty," I explained."They will not leave their posts. To them, this is the most important time of their lives, and the have great feelings of responsibilities. As long as their wives sit on the eggs, the ganders will keep them company and guard them closely. When their wives leave the nest, usually only for water, the ganders go with them. If The geese will not leave their nests to come and eat, neither will the ganders."

"Dont they get hungry?" David wanted to know. David has a rather good appetite and is big and strong for his age. He has trouble understanding how anything can go without eating.

"I suppose they do, boys," I said."I'm sure they must, for this goes on for more than a month."

"More than a month without eating?" Even their father joined the boys in this question.

"That's right. Of course, they do pick around a little bit. I see the ganders eating a little grass. I suppose the geese may eat a little at night, when I dont see them."

"Dont they get thin and weak?" Ralph or David asked. ~~the boys next wanted to know, and I had to tell them that~~ I explained, This does happen, especially to the mothers, who get very thin. But like all other parents, they are devoted to their children and willingly do whatever they think is necessary. They are fearless in the face of danger and would give their lives the defend the young. I recalled what had happened to ralph the week before when Mr. Berrypatch thought his nest was in danger. Then I told them how Mr. Orchard had attacked me, even though I am more than twenty times his weight. The boys agreed this was real bravery.

After a moment's pause they had another question:"Why does it take a month?"

~~"That's a good question," I agreed.~~ Suppose we begin with the eggs, which is really the beginning. ~~But first,~~ Incubation, which is what this is called, does not take a month with all kinds of fowl. It does with geese and most ducks. The duck ~~known as the~~ 'Muscovy' takes about five weeks. Chickens take three weeks.

some birds take other periods of time. But with all of them, what happens is the same thing. And this is the way it happens."

We sat down in a circle, the boys looking at me with great interest, and I told them this story. I think it is a beautiful story. It shows the great care with which nature has planned its grand plan for her flying creatures.

First I explained their need for food if the geese are to live, and how when they are very young, the goslings can be killed by too much cold. ~~When they are~~ For several weeks when the young first come into the world they have no feathers to keep them warm. The have a thin coat of down, which is almost like short hair or fuzz.

During ~~the cold part of the year,~~ the winter, the grass is not growing, and all the seeds left on the plants before the frost killed the plants have been eaten. Food is scarce. There is barely enough for the parents and nothing for the young.

Nature lets the whole world know when the weather is going to change for the warmer. The first sign is in the length of the peiod of daylight. This ever so slowly begins to get longer. That, of course, is beaause the time the sun shines on the earth just a little more each day, and it is from the sun that the earth gets its warmth. When the earth gets warm enough, theplants that

geese depend on for food come to life again and begin to grow. When this happens, the amount of food available increases. Also, the young shoots of grass and other plants are more nourishing and are especially good for the young.

In order that the young not come into the world when they might not get enough to eat and might not be warm enough when it be warm enough for them to stay healthy and grow, nature sees to it that the geese and other members of the bird family do not lay their eggs until the days begin to get longer. In our part of the world that ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ begins about the end of February or a little later.

The means by which nature controls this is both simple and wonderful. In the bodies of all living things are organs knows as "glands". One of these glands is called the "pituitary" gland. This gland gives off the chemicals that cause the female to begin to lay eggs. The scientific name for this is "ovulation". The scientific name for the egg is "ovum". Now the simple and wonderful part of nature's plan is this: those chemicals do not begin to flow until the pituitary gland is encouraged by the lengthening amount of light! It is not the strength of the light, but the slowly increasing amount of light each day that causes this to happen. As we have seen that is when

the food supply and weather are more favorable.

When all of this happens the gander, who is the father, press his body on the mother's and plants a seed in it. This seed has the scientific name of "sperm" or "sperm cell". The part of the body in which it is planted is the "oviduct", and you can see from this name that it has to do with the egg. It is the part of the body in which the goose makes the egg. ~~This the goose is making the egg, the sperm cell makes its way~~ The sperm call ~~is included~~ becomes part of the egg, and the entire egg is protected by the shell before the goose lays the egg.

"Look at my boys' eyes!" Mr. Ward said ~~told me. I did.~~ They were almost as big as eggs. They were opened wide in wonder and excitement.

As soon as Mr. Ward spoke the boys found their tongues and began asking many questions. Mr. Ward laughed and said,"That's enough for one day. If we go too fast you might not be able to remember it all. Besides, I think mother probably has lunch waiting for us by now."

So they said "goodbye" and went home to eat and I returned to my regular work.

Sure enough, bright and early the next Saturday my friends were back, and they were so full of questions the words just bubbled out of them. The kind of questions they asked showed they had been thinking about what they had learned. David wanted to know how a little goose or chicken or bird could be in an egg and you couldn't see anything like that when the egg was broken open. Ralph wanted to know why the goslings couldn't be born alive, like kittens and puppies. They wanted to know why the feathers couldn't be grown to begin with, instead of down, and many, many others things.

"Whoe, boys!" I said.,"Lets take it in steps. Lets go ~~down~~ over to the nests, but this time hold my hands, and look a little closer at the incubation."

Each of them took one of my hands. Their father opened and closed the gate for us. The boys ~~held~~ wanted to run ahead, and they laughed and chattered so I had to slow them down and quiet them.

"How are you ear and ribs, Ralph?" I inquired. That did it. Ralph's ear was still red, and his ribs were probably still tender.

"Lets not disturb them, "I cautioned." Lets not worry the ganders."

~~Happily, but more carefully, the boys~~

The boys quieted down and we eased our way around Mr. and Mrs. Berrypatch and went toward the Orchard Honkers. Mr. Berrypatch is a little more quick-tempered and I feared he might recall his incident with Ralp. As we got nearer Mr. Orchard , who had been squatting near the bottom of the little hill, he suddenly thrust his head into the air, making his neck absolutely straight and extending it as far out as he could. Then we continued he called out "Keeonnk". That is all he said. We moved a little closer- we were still about 50 feet away- and he said, "Keeonnk! Keeonnk'. Keeonnk!" Then we didn't stop he stood up and looked right at us. We kept advancing, very slowly. I squeezed the boys' hand to wan them to stay quiet and watch carefully.

We took a few more steps and Mr. Orchard fluffed his feathers so hard he looked twice his size, which is really only about eight pounds. The fluffing was so forceful it rolled him from side to side. There was no misunderstanding him. He was warning us to stop, telling us this was his territory and he dint want us there and wouldn't allow us in it.

When we continued to advance, he began to move toward us. He didn't run or hurry in any way. He was making it clear he didn't want to fight, but that

he was ready to, if he felt the need. While he ~~xxxxx~~ walked, he first pul ed his neck and head down onto his body as much as he could and then rapidly htrust it into the air as high as he could. At the same time he repeated his warning call,"Keeonnk! Keeonnk! Kee-ONNK!", getting louder and a little higher pitched each time he repeated it.

I stopped and held the boys back. ~~Their father~~ Mr Ward stood ~~xxxxxx~~ without moving along side of us. And Mr. Orchard stopped. While we stood still, he did also.

As soon as we moved forward again, ~~which we, did~~, taking short, slow steps, he began to advance on us again. This time he kept his neck down against his body so tightly his beautiful black head, with the slash of white on both sides, seemed to be growing from right between his shoulders. He didn't make a sound and he walked with such firmness his body rolled a little from side to side.

I decided we had gone as far as we safely could and I again squeezed my friends' hands and pulled back on their arms. We stopped, and so did Mr. Orchard. He went into the fluffing act again, clearly trying to threaten us, and again, louder and stronger, gave his warning call.

"Lets move backward, slowly, "I suggested ~~to my companions~~, and we did.

That satisfied my Orchard. He just stood his ground.

When we had made as graceful a retreat as people so much larger than such a small Canadian goose can make and were where I believed he would pay no attent on to us we stopped again. I didn't have to explain it to the boys. Mr. Orchard had made himself that clear. I did point out, however, that Mr. Orchard was a fine and peaceful gentleman. First, he had protected his wife and the family to be. Then, he had honorably avoided combat. And at the same time he had maintained his dignity and self respect.

The point where we now were was uphill from Mrs. Berrypatch's nest, and we could see it clearly. I asked the boys to tell us what they saw.

"Its got a bunch of old grass and twigs,"Ralph observed.

"And old leaves,"David added.

"Feathers, too," I said."She pulls the fine feathers or'down" from her breast and lines the nest with them. This is where we get the expression 'feathering the nest', which means making things as nice as possible. That fine down holds the heat and makes things warmer. Old-time people used to make their winter matrasses, covers and pillows from goose down because it is so soft and comfortable. The goose does it to make her nest warmer for the eggs and softer for the goslings

after they are born, which is called 'hatched' when they come from eggs.

"take a good look at her nest again, so you will understand ~~it~~ better when I tell you how the eggs are incubated, and then I think we had better go back to the house and let these geese relax."

They took a good look at the nest and saw that Mr. Berrypatch had built it so large that it extended well out from her body on every side. It was built up on its sides, holding in both the eggs and the heat from her body. ~~in~~. Each piece of grass, each twig and each leaf was a separate trip for her from where she found it to where she made her nest. This was quite a bit or work. It took her many trips over a period of several days. But it was worth her work, because it made her a fine nest.

Back in the house we sat down around the table and the boys smiled when I told them I'd now begin to answer their earlier questions about the eggs.

The egg is, ~~in my opinion,~~ another one of nature's grand design. An egg that contains the sperm cell is ~~called a~~ "fertile" egg. In contains inside of the shell everything that is needed for the gosling to start to grow, to take shape, to reach its full size and the strength it needs to break out of the shell. It also has enough food and water to keep the gosling alive for about three days after it hatches.

Except for the sperm cell, the egg keeps very well. If kept cool, it will not spoil for months. However, the sperm cell begins to lose its strength after about a week and is usually dead after two weeks. This is not true if incubation begins before that time.

Thus, the goose has several weeks before she has to start sitting on her eggs. This is also called "setting", and when she begins to sit other changes take place in her glands that make it impossible for her to lay any more eggs for quite a while.

When the goose "sets" she applies the heat of her body to the eggs. She also keeps them wet by wetting her feathers, which rub the water off on the eggs when she goes back on the nest. This is like what happens when we plant flower and vegetable seeds. They begin to grow only if it is warm and if they are moistened. It takes some time before we can see that these seeds have begun to grow or develop. Scientists call this "germination". However, growth begins before we can see it. We dont usually see it until the seed breaks through the soil. Exactly the same thing happens with eggs. Growth begins almost as soon as sitting starts, but it is not seen until the gosling comes out of the shell.

Life begins in the egg where the sperm cell has joined the germinal spot. If we go into a dark room or closet and shine a beam of light against the egg on its side away from our eyes, we can see ~~thix~~ the gosling as it begins to grow. This is called "candling" because years and years ago people did this with a candle, before electric lights had been invented. Where eggs are not set on by the mother or another fowl, refferred to as "artificial incubation", we farmers candle the eggs several times before they hatch, and those that are not growing are taken from the incubator. This is the machine that keeps the eggs at the proper temperature. If these "infertile" eggs are not removed, they can give off gasses as they spoil. These gasses can go right through the shells of the "fertile" eggs and cause them to go bad.

Beginning from seven to nine days after incubation starts, candling shows several things. First it shows the life inside the egg, or the "embryo". The blood vessels show quite clearly. They then look much like a spider spread out on the inside of the eggs. ~~XXX~~ Gradually the egg at its ~~xxix~~ end with the sharper point begins to ~~darker~~ look lighter. At the other end, where it is more mound, it gets clear.

As the embryo grows it needs the same thing all living things need. ~~It must have~~ food, water and air. All of these are inside the shell when the egg is laid. If you candle an egg as soon as it is laid, you will see a dark shadow near the center, but closer to the more rounded end. This is almost perfectly round and it moves if you twist the egg. It is the yolk, and it very rich food. Surrounding the yolk is the white, whichhas a number of things in it, ~~and~~ including water. At the edge of the round end is a clear spot, which is nothing but plain air.

It is important that the yolk remain in about the same position in the egg before the embryo starts to grow and while it is growing. Nature takes care of ~~it~~ this with two whitish cords, known as chalazae. The next time mother opens an egg, if you look closely you will see that one end of each of these cords is attached to the yolk, which is quite yellow. The other end is he shaped much like a screw, and this shape allows it to hold onto the thinner white. The cords nearer the round end of the egg is stronger. That is what keeps the yolk from falling down to the bottom of the egg.

"Why does the yolk have to be in the center?" Ralph ~~interrupted me to~~ asked.

~~"Yes, why?" David asked.~~

At this point Mr. Ward reminded the boys there was Saturday chores to do at home. "That will be a good place to begin next time," he declared.

The boys kept saying such things as "Oh, no. We want to hear it now. It wont take very long." But their father was firm. I really think his real reason was his fear the boys would get this beautiful story mixed up in their minds if they heard too much of it at one time.

Although they di complain, saying "Gee, whiz" and "Please daddy - just a few minutes longer, huh?", the two boys were good sports and followed their father to the car in which they then drove home to do the many little jobs that were their Saturday work around the house.

About an hour before suppertime I was surprized to see the Ward's car coming. The boys jumped out in grat great excitement the minute it stopped.

"We were real good and got our work done early," Ralph shouted. David asked, "Now can we hear the rest of the story? Why must the yolk be in the center?"

Mr. Ward smiled and told me that the boys really had done their work very well, without any fooling around; They had kept after him on the way home until he promised that if they didn't complain and did do their work, he'd bring them back before supper just long enough for them to hear the rest of the story about the egg.

Ralph and David turned their happy faces towrdme, with their eyes shining, showing their interest and seeming to ask all the questions they had in their minds. Of course, I enjoy it very much when such nice children want to learn all about livin things. Without wasting any time, I picked up where we had left off.

Because the yolk was the big question in their minds I went back to that. I explained that is is rich in proteins, sometimes called "the building blocks of the body", which are necessary for growth and health. It also has other

important things, such as fats, which give energy.

As the embryo grows, it takes up some of the yolk and white. The white is all around it but the yolk is much smaller and in one place. Besides that, several days before the gosling is hatched or born, it is completely formed. The down is on it but it is not quite ready to hatch. Some of the blood is still outside its body, and it would bleed to death if it hatched too soon. Besides, just before the gosling hatches, it takes into its body the part of the yolk it hasn't needed for its growth up until that time. Now, if the yolk had been stuck to the side of the shell, this just couldn't happen. The farmer knows this, and all the time the eggs are in the incubator, he carefully turns them several times each day. Even the goose knows it, and she also turns them often. To turn them, she reaches out with her bill, presses it lightly on the end away from her, and slowly hooks the egg with her bill until it rolls over, just like a ball.

It usually takes about three days for the gosling to use up what is left of the yolk. For that time it and other members of the fowl and bird families really eat from two directions. They can eat through their mouths, as other things do. But they are also eating up the yolk.

If they are very tired when they hatch, they just dont want to eat. In

fact, they are very, very VERY tired, because coming out of that big, strong shell is the hardest work they ever do. In this way nature makes it possible for them to rest up without going hungry or getting weaker.

"Now, boys, we'd better go home." Mr. Ward said. You have heard the rest of the story about the egg, and mother will soon have supper ready."

"Only one more thing," Ralph begged. "Let us hear how the gosling gets out of the shell."

"Please, daddy," both boths asked, "please."

"well, you have been good boys, their father said. "Okay, if it wont make us late for supper."

"I dont think it will," I said, and the boys clapped their hand and shouted, and they put their hands over their mouths, and snickered and got real quiet.

I went back to the part where I was explaining that it was such hard work for the gosling to come out of the shell.

"Did you ever hear anybody say 'scarce as hen's teeth'? I asked the boys.

"Sure, but that is just a joke," David laughed. "Hens dont have any teeth."

"That's right," I agreed. "But when they are first hatched they do. So do ducks, and geese, and birds."

"You are just kidding us", Ralph exclaimed.

But I wasn't. It is the truth. If it weren't, none of them could hatch. As the embryo grows and takes shape, the bill or beak it formed. The proper name for this part of the body is "mandible", and the term "Bill" is really a shortening of "mandible". It has two parts, just as people and animals have two ~~jaw~~ parts to their mouths. On the top one, in the center of the very end, is a single tooth! It is sharp and quite hard. It is the hardest part of the body!

Does it ~~Nowxitxmay~~ seem strange to you that fowl and birds have their one tooth outsie outside their mouths? It isn't strange. It is another important part of this wonderful plan of nature's. That one, hard tooth is like a chisel,

"Do you know what a chisel is?" I asked David.X

"Sure," he answered. I have seen daddy use his to chop a hole in wood.

"But when daddy uses a chisel", Ralph said, he also uses a hammer. Where does the gosling get a hammer inside that shell?

"He uses his head," I answered. Before the boys could interrup again, I ~~held up my hand to stop them and~~ continued my account of how the gosling gets out of the shell.

You may wonder why a gosling or a chick is born with a single tooth on the end of its beak and on the outside, but you cant see one when they grow up. Well, that is the way it really is. They also have something else you cannot see. The strongest muscle in their bodies is one that starts at the back of the top of the head and goes down the neck to the body.

With this muscle they can jerk real hard. When they jerk, the top of the head is pulled back and the bill flys out against the shell, with that single tooth hitting the shell. In this way, the head becomes the hammer that is used to drive the chisel, and the tooth is the chisel.

They have to tap the shell many, many times ~~before they~~ in the same place before they can crack the shell. In between taps, they often stop and rest. This is hard work. But when they shell crack just a tiny bit, they twist inside the shell, using all their ~~muscles~~ tooth again to help them twist. Then they start tap tap tapping again until they make another little crack. They keep on doing this intil they have just about cut the blunt ~~egg~~ end of the shell off.

If you were to hold the egg while this is happening you can ~~ya~~ hear the tapping, and sometimes you can hear theodd chirp the gosling makes. It sounds like "feep, feep feep." Each place where the shell has cracked, it is raised

just a little bit. As you look at that end of the egg, you will see that the gosling or whatever else is hatching always turns in the same way. This is the way the hands of the clock turn. The special name given to the breaking out of the shell is "pipping". Sometimes it takes a gosling as much as two days from the time it first pips until it comes out of the shell.

Once in a while when the gosling has chiselled off the end of the shell it is just too exhausted to make another move, and it just rests for a minute until it gets its strength back. If you look at it then you will see a wonderful thing. It has grown inside its shell is a way that no man could copy. None of the space is wasted. Its head and neck have grown under one wing! It is folded inside the shell in exactly the shape of the shell. And it is covered with a thick liquid that acts like grease. This keeps it from sticking to the shell. It also allows the gosling to slip out of the shell when the time comes.

They dont just slip out, though. They make a big push with their legs, and it sometimes is like a big jump. The gosling may be carried more than its own length by this push.

But when it is entirely outside the egg, it is really completely done it.

It just lays there, looking almost dead. It is dark and wet. You can see all this only if the egg has been hatched in an incubator. If the mother hatches the eggs, she has them under her body and under her wings. But it is the same thing. The incubator is only a copy of the goose. While it is a good copy, it is not as good as the real thing. The goose will hatch more of her eggs than the incubator.

"Now, boys," I said, " dont you think you had better hurry home for supper?"

"Well, I am hungry, but I'd like to hear more," Ralph ansered. David said,"Me, too, I'm hungry but I'd like to hear just a little more, anyway."

"Not now," their daddy announced firmly. "We can't keep mother waiting, and we are a little late now."

As they left I promised them a real surprise the next time they came. They got quite excited, making all kinds of guesses. They kept calling to me as the car drove off, but I wouldn't give them a hint. I thought it would be a pleasant surprise and that they would enjoy it more if it were a complete surprise.

V

~~Did I have a surprise for them,~~ Early in the morning of The day of their visit I went out to lo k at Mrs. Orchard's nest and I didn't see her. That was a surprise for me! ~~It was pretty early in the morning, but~~ The sun was not yet up and I couldn't see ~~to~~ clearly. But I could see well enough to be certain Mrs. Orchard was not there. Her natural color~~ing~~ is brown, with fine black marks called "pencilling". This makes it easy for her not to be seen because if she doesn't move, she often seems to be part of her nest and the surrounding earth and grass or weeds. However, she has a large white mark on each side of her head, and this does show if you look carefully. No, Mrs. Orchard wasn't there.

While I was wondering if I should go all the way and examine the nest and run the risk of an attack by Mr. Orchard, if they were just off getting a drink, or if Mrs. Orchard was wetting her feathers, I heard the answer. Yes, I heard it before I saw it!

From down the hill to my right I heard "feep, feep, feep, feep," and at the same time the soft "kunk, kunk, kunk" sound that the adult geese make when they are contented. The sound is something like the low grunt of a pig. When the adult Canada geese make it, you know everything is alright and that they are happy.

The "feep, feep, feep" is the voice of the gosling when it is first hatched. If it is said softly and slowly, there is nothing wrong with the gosling; it is just talking, more or less normal conversation. If it is repeated rapidly, the gosling is in trouble of some kind or is afraid, or perhaps cold or hungry.

So the feeping, which was not hurried, told me that I had as much reason as the adult geese to be happy.

Very slowly, I turned and carefully walked down toward the parents, who I could make out clearly enough in the poor light. I was careful because I didn't want to alarm them. Also, I wanted to be certain not to step on a gosling. They are a beautiful deep yellowish color when first hatched, with a strong suggestion of green in it. They also have a little black, and the legs, feet and bill are entirely black. With these colors, they might not show up well in the dim light.

In a few moments I was close enough to see clearly. I saw that I had not one reason to be happy, but six reasons. There were six little goslings stumbling around their proud parents' feet. They were beautiful! While they were not steady on their feet, the young ones were doing very well for

the short length of time they had been in the world. They had hatched during the night, possibly late the afternoon of the day before. I had visited Mrs. Orchard before sundown and she was sitting quietly on her nest. From that I believed the hatching had not yet taken place. Of course, she could have been fooling me. She could have sat still just to pretend the young ones had not hatched. Nature's creatures are wise that way. They do this to protect themselves and their families. When the ~~first~~ goslings first hatch they are very weak. Sometimes the goose knows one or more of the eggs will still hatch, even if a little late. So she will keep those who have hatched under her wings, where they can dry off better. As we have seen, when they first pip, the goslings are still wet. Like children, if they run around or even remain uncovered when they are wet, they will take sick.

You might thing it is difficult for the goose to tuck the goslings under her wings. Really, it is very easy. She grunts a quiet "unk, unk, unk" at them and they know she means "come here" or "get close to me", and they obey her right away and without argument. This is ~~also~~ true of all ~~other~~ fowl and birds. When they are born, theyalready understand all the sounds their families use. And all the members of their family, those who live many years ago and those who will not come into the world for many, many year yet, all make the same

sounds. They all mean the same thing when they make these sounds, and when they hear others making these different sounds, they always understand exactly what the other mean. I think it is fair and reasonable to call these sounds talk or conversation. They do for the winged creatures exactly what talk or conversation does for people.

Well, when the mother orders her babies to come close and they do, she then raises her wings, places them over the babies, flutters them and twists herself a few times, and like magic, there is not a gosling to be seen! They are neatly tucked under her wings, where they are safe and warm.

But as I said, I believed the hatching had been completed during the night at the latest. This was because the little ones could take more than a few steps at a time without falling down or sitting down to rest. They were pretty lively.

I knew Mr. Orchard would not leave his family now, so I went up to take a creful careful look at the nest. No eggs! Only egg shells. That meant Mrs. Orchard had laid six eggs and hatched six goslings. That is a pretty good record. I looked at the empty shells. They were dry, so I knew for sure now that the goslings had been out of them for a little while. I also noticed

one of the shells had a different kind of mark on the edge. This told me a whole story that I decided to save for Ralph and David.

I left the nest just as it was and went to do my other work. I did it as fast as I could so I could get back to the house a little earlier for breakfast and have time to tell my wife all about it before my young friends came.

Did you know that most farmers do their morning chores before breakfast? They do. If they didn't, they would get too hungry before lunch time. Years ago, the farmer's wife also had to get up very early and build a wood fire to cook on. She had many other duties, like baking bread, making soap, and doing the wash by hand. In our modern world, machines make life easier for the farmer's wife, as they have the farmer. Most buy their bread at the stores today, and things like that.

Breakfast was not yet ready when I got to the house, so I took another look at the Orchard family. The sun was up now and I could see them well. The young had already learned to march in a single file! There they were, father in front, his head high, mother in the back, and the six little ones in between. They marched almost as well as if they had been trained by a soldier!

Of course, my wife was happy about the good news I had. I told her all

about it- everything. When we finished breakfast, I could hardly wait for the boys to see my surprize.

The Wards arrived a little later than I expected. But that was a good thing because in the spring the grass is often wet and slippery in the early morning. After the sun has shined on the grass for a while, and the gentle breeze has blown over it, the grass is dry again. It is then safer and more comfortable, especially on a hillside.

"Where is our surprize?" the boys was demanding, even before the car stopped. Ralph was leaning out the window on one side and David was leaning out the window on the other. Before he allowed them to leave the car, Mr. Ward first lectured his sons on safety in automobiles. I could see by his face that the father was just pretending to be severe. Like Mr. Orchard and Mr. Berrypatch, Mr. Ward knew of his responsibilities to his family. Leaning out the window of a moving car, even if it is moving slowly, is not a ~~good~~ safe thing to do. Mr. Ward explained this to the boys, I am certain not for the first time, before he allowed them out of the car.

As soon as the boys got out of the car they ran up to me as fast as they could. They grabbed my hands, started to pull me toward the field in which the Canadian Geese lived, and shouted question after question at me as they pulled me.

The were so happy and excited their father and I enjoyed it.

I am certain Mr. Ward knew what my surprize was. But I kept talking about other things and never gave the boys a hint. Little by little we got closer to the geese. The boys didn't notice them because they were pulling on me and because they were looking at me while the questions just poured from their mouths.

When I thought we were close enough I stopped. "Why dont we take a look around?" I asked the boys. Of course, I kept a tight grip on their hands, because I didn't want another accident like Ralph had had.

They were puzzled for a minute. They they did look around. At first they didn't see the goslings, who were hidden by their coloring and their small size, which was not much higher than the grass.

Suddenly there was a boyish shout, almost a scream."Look! Look!" Ralph exclaimed.

"Where?" asked David, who had seen nothing unusual, "at what?"

"Right there! Right there!" Ralph shouted, jumping up and down., "right there! Baby Geese! Goslings!" They are beautiful! Beautiful!"

I really had to hold tightly to keep them from running up on the family.

"Remember what Mr. Orchard will do?" I asked. This slowed the boys down, but it didn't quiet them. They kept talking about how cute the goslings were, what they were doing and things like that. When some of the excitement had worn off and there was less chance of making Mr. Orchard too excited for safety, we did move up a little closer and the boys just drank everything in with their eyes. I had never seen them as excited or as happy.

"What is the goose spitting out", David asked me. "She is spitting something out, isn't she?"

She was, indeed. I explained to the boys how the parents teach their young everything they have to know. Eating, of course, is important. What to eat and what not to eat is also important. So, until the young learn to pick up seeds and bite off pieces of grass or clover, ~~the parents~~ and swallw them, the parents first take things that are good for geese to eat into their mouths, and then they spit them out until the goslings get the idea. Often the goslings will be attracted to what the parents have had and out of curiosity will pick it up and eat it.

Once they understood what was happening, the sto boys stood perfectly still and just watched. They didn't make a sound as they watched, and they wondered at the sight of the geese patiently teaching the goslings how

and what to eat.

After a little while, I suggested we examine the nest.

"Oh, yes, lets!" both boys exclaimed together. So, still holding on to them to keep them from running and disturbing the family. I led them slowly aound the nest of Mrs. Berrypatch, around Mr. Berrypatch, who was on guard, and up to Mrs. Orchard's nest.

Even more clearly now, the boys could see the great amount of work that Mrs. Orchard had done to make a fine, strong, deep and warm nest. They looked at all the little soft down feathers from her breast and asked me if she had really plucked them out. Didn't it hurt, they wanted to know. I guessed it did, and pointed out that all kinds of parents, human and animal, did many things for their children.

They I picked up the egg shell that had attracted my attention in the early morning. "Look at this edge, right here, "I told them. What doe you see?" When they didn't answer I put my little finger in the edge of the shell where it looked as though small pieces had been bitten out.

"Do you see how the edge is different here than it is elsewhere?" I asked. Do you think the mother goose could have bitten little peices out here?"

Mr. Ward also looked at that shell carefully. They all agreed that is the way it looked. Finally the boys asked "Why?"

"Sometimes the gosling is weak and gets tired," I explained. Sometimes it sticks in the shell. And sometimes maybe it is just a little lazy. Whatever the reason, unless the mother goose gets that gosling out of the shell, she has to make a choice between staying on the nest too long, which is bad for her and for those who have already hatched, or going away with the rest of her brood and forgetting that one.

"Nature tells her what to do, in some way. I dont know if she understands the "feep, feep, feep" of the unhatched gosling to mean it is in trouble, if she feels when it stops trying to get out and knows it will die if it doesn't, or whether it is just instinct. By the way, do you know what instinct is?

"I think I do," Ralp said. "Isn8t that when something somebody does soemthing without thinking, like from habit?"

"Yes, that's pretty close to it. Scientists believe animals, birds, fish and reptiles cannot think as people do. The things they do are the result of instinct, not knowledge or thought, I answered.

Going back to the story I had been telling, I said I thought the unusual mark on the edge of the shell was where the goose had helped the

gosling out , probably by taking small piece out of the shell. I told them that sometimes these goslings the mother had to help were not as strong as the others, Also, in some cases it seemed as though there was something wrong with the late-hatching ones. Most of the time they live, but sometimes they do die before they get very old.

Naturally, we all wanted this one to live.

Then the boys wanted to know who taught the goslings hatched in the incubator, not by the mother. Did I get down on the ground and bite grass and things like that?

Laughingly I replied, "No, I dont eat grass, and there isn't much I have to teach them. That's where instinct comes in again. But there is more than one instinct. The instinct that tells the gosling what to do is the special instinct for that case. Let me give you a couple of examples."

When any young thing is first born, I told them, instinct tells it that it has a mother. Instinct also tells it that the first thing it sees of feels or smells and that feeds it or keeps it warm is its mother. When it is first born, it is weaker and more helpless that is usually ever is again. So its strongest instinct is to pay attention.

Now, if it is born in an incubator, instinct right away tells it to go

to the first thing it sees. If it is another gosling, they may stay close to each other, or even push real close together. But the goslings cannot feed each other. They cannot proetct each other, either. When they get hungry or thirsty, instinct tells them how to use their bills, but they cannot eat or drink each other. So, they just wander around, trying out every thing they see, until they find what they can eat. Then instinct tells them how to eat. It is the same way with drinking. They just wander around until they find water. They may find it with their feet, but they know what to do with it when they do find it. Of course, farmers see to it that goslings hatched in incubators have water, feed and heat, and often we help them find these things. Once they find them, they know what to do.

If the heat is just right, they stretch out, spreading their legs and stubby little wings so the heat can reach all parts of their bodies. If there is not enough heat, they crowd in the center of it and somethimes smother themselves. If the heat is too great, they try and stay on the edge of the heated area. If the heat is either too much or too little they make a very fast, loud and shrill "feeping" sound, and they all do it. If there are enough of them in the building, it sounds like one long "feep" that doesn't end. Once you have heard this sound -in fact, even if you have never heard it before- you know

from the kind of sound it is that the goslings are in some kind of trouble. It is really a distress call.

Some grown geese have an instinct that is good for the young ones. Usually, grown geese want nothing to do with any goslings that are not their own. But some try and adopt any goslings they see without parent with them.

The boys were telling me how wonderful it was that nature could give all its creatures instincts that made it possible for them to live. We were walking back to the house, because it was again getting around to the time when the boys had to do their Saturday work. We noticed that once again the Mr. and Mrs, Orchard were marching their brood.

"What do you think they are up to?" David asked.

"It lo ks to me as though they are taking the flock to water," I replied. "Let us watch and see."

So, with care not to get in Mr. Berrypatch's way, we slowly made our way as close to the pond as we could. There Mr. Orchard walked right straight in. And one after another the little ones followed, Mrs. Orchard bringing up the rear.

"Look at that! Look at tha!" David exclaimed, again jumping up and down

and wavinf his arms around. "Look at them swim, and they were just born, too."

"Boys", I said, "geese are part of the family known as waterfowl. Nature intends them to live on and near the water. All of them can swim the minute the first find water. This is one way they can be safe if animals come afterx hunting them. Now see what happens."

We watched for a while, First Mr. Morchard dipped his bill into the water and lifted it out and then Mrs. Orchard, who was on the other side of her little brood did the same thing. The parents always keep the young between them so they can watch and protect the goslings better. After a little while, first one gosling, then another, untilfinally all of them had copies their parents. Once they learned they could drink the water they did so. They opened their bills, dipped them into the water, raised their heads and let the water run down their throats.

"Boy, those geese and gosling are smart things", Ralph said. He said it in a way that showed he really meant it, too.

"If we are smart," Mr. Ward said, "we'll be getting home so we can get our work done before dark."

The boys really didn't want to leave, and I didn't want them to, because they are nice boys and it made me happy to see them happy and enjoying themselves

what they were supposed to without grumbling, ~~they could always come back again~~ their father would always bring them back again.

"Will anything new happen before next Saturday," David asked, in a way that made me think he was afraid he would miss something.

"No, not really," I assured them. "Nature takes things in a proper way, a step at a time. But maybe by next Saturday there will be another little surprize for you."

"We can't wait until next Saturday, then" the boys said as they got into the car. "Goodbye until next Saturday."

I wished them goodbye and we waved to each other as they drove off.

As our friends drove off, my wife asked me what kind of a new surprize I expected to have for them. I told her I expected Mr. Orchard to supply my treat for the youngsters. Perhaps it would be better to say Mr. Orchard in part, and the victory of one instinct over another instinct, for there would be two different instinct as work, each opposing the other. One would tell the geese and the goslings to do one thing, the other would tell them not to do it.

This may seem confusing, but it is really quite simple. Mr. Orchard would be the key to my whole plan. I knew what he had done last year, when the Orchard Honkers had had a new family, andI was certain he would do the same thing this year. I also believed getting him to do it would be much easier. Last year he was not as tame as he is now.

My plan, and my surprize for the boys, was to have the goslings eating out of my hand! The goslings, that is, and both parents. But there was a good chance that if I could do this, by the time the boys came again, the parents would have stopped eating from my hand again.

This does sound mixed up, doesn't it? Let me tell you what happened last year. ~~I think it will all become clear after you know that story.~~

When I first dicovered Mrs. Orchard sitting last year, I worried about

her refusal to leave the nest to eat. ~~Most of our~~ All of our geese have always been very fond of bread. If I dont give them some every day, they come looking for me and ask for it. The way they honk ~~at me~~ tells me that is exactly what they want. If only one goose finds me, and I give it the bread, it honks in a way that the other understand means "Hey, gang; come quick. He's giving me bread." Our geese are about bread as children are about candy.

So, I filled my pockets with bread and set out to feed Mrs. Orchard. But Mr. Orchard had different ideas. As soon as I got near her nest, Mr. Orchard made it very clear that he didn't want me or anything else there and was prepared, if necessary, to do something about it. What to do? I could catch him and tie him up, and then take the bread to his wife. But if I did that, he would fight to get loose and might hurt himself. Yet I did want to offer her food.

~~The solution that answer was~~ Instead of trying to get up to Mr. Orchard, I decided to feed Mr. Orchard. He had eaten bread, but never from my hand, as all the other kinds of geese did. I took a slice from my pocket and broke it into little pieces, each one as large as he could swallow without choking. I threw the first piece real close to him. He looked at it, then looked at me, and then looked at the bread. Finally, he decided to eat it. Then I tossed ~~him~~ another

piece, a little closer to me. After a moment of two, he took the few steps toward me and again ate the bread. I knew if he got too close he'd feel that he had to attack me, so I got him only a little closer and then fed him the remaining pieces of that slice and two other slices, which I also broke up for him. If I hadn't broken the bread, he would, after some trouble, have worked it into pieces small enough to swallow. Canadian geese are not as strong in the jaws as the larger, regular farm geese. The farm geese are known as "domesticated" geese. This means geese of the family or household, or tame geese. While all geese are believed to come from the same ancestor, the European graylag goose, the are not all alike. During the many years farmers have raised geese, by picking out the largest and the best to be the parents of other geese to be raised for food, farmers have increased the size of domesticated geese by quite a bit. Our are more than twice as large as our wild geese. Wild geese have had to make their own living. They have not been fed by farmers, as the domesticated geese have been for thousands of years. The kinds of food the wild geese could find for themselves kept them healthy. But it didn't make them grow as big. Also, there was no one to pick out only the best of them to be the parents of the new generations. So the wild geese never got as big.

The wild geese depended more on flying from place to place, picking up

what food they could find and looking some place else for more food. Little by little, they came to eat more ssed and berries and things like that. Their jaws never had to grow as strong as the jaws of farm geese, which over the years got to be largely grass eaters.

If you look at the edges of the bill of the domesticated goose, you will find that they are shaped like a fine saw. It is the same as if they had teeth. Also, like the rest of their bodies, their heads are more than twice as large as the heads of the Canadian geese. From this you can understand that the wild geese cannot chew as well as the domesticated geese. On the other hand, because they have had to fly for so many thousands of years, even though they are much smaller, the wild geese have wings that are ever so much more powerful than the domesticated geese. This is the way Nature work. Living things learn to live and survive, to adapt themselves to the world they live in.

Well, to get back to Mr. Orchard, the next day I did almost the same thing, ~~XXXX~~ I let him get a little closer to me, and ~~while he was doing~~ this, I also backed a little closer to Mrs. Orchard's nest. Instead of giving him three slices at one time, I gave him one slice and went back and did the same thing two more times. Each time I got him a little closer to me and each time I got a little closer

to the nest. Before long, I was getting close enough to the nest to be able to throw bread where Mrs. Orchard could see it.

Once I could get to the nest without having to fight Mr. Orchard, I changed my plan with him. I went near him and then stood in the same place. I threw little pieces of bread to him as before, but little by little, he had to get closer to me to get the bread. I was careful not to do this near the nest. If I had he would have worried and might have become nervous and wanted to fight. Every day we did the same thing, and the we k before the eggs were due to hatch, Mr. Orchard was coming to meet me. By that time he came to within two feet of me to pick up the bread. During all this time he learned I was not going to hurt him. When I had his confidence, I stopped throwing the bread once he got close to me. I just squatted down and held a piece of bread as far out as I could. He looked at it but didn't move. I let the bread fall from my fingers and broguht it back to put another piece in it. Mr. Orchard ate the bread on the ground. Slowly, I put the hand with the bread between the fingertips out again as far from my body as I could reach. He just looked at it.

I didn't move. I just waited. Mr. Orchard, of course, really wanted that bread. But this time I didn't drop it. If he wanted it, he would have to take

I suppose he was nervousx and afraid. But I waited. Several times he reached out as though he were going to take the bread. Each time his head and neck shivered a little. And each time he pulled his head back.

But all the time he had his eyes on that piece of bread. Finally, he got enough courage to take it. He reached out for it, still shaking. His bill was opening and closing as he reached. When it was only an inch of two away he made a fast lunge and got the pieee of bread.

After that it was easy. Several times a day he got his bread, but always he had to take it from my hand. He had the habit by the time the young hatched.

When Mrs. Orchard didn't have to stay on the nest, I had taken several slices to her every day. Mr. Orchard didn't seem to want me to get close to her or the goslings, so I didn't. He was a gentleman, and never once did he eat his wifes bread. He came to me for his. During this time I suppose the goslings were finding and eating the crumbs Mrs. Orchard made when she broke her bread up.

One evening I didn't feed them the bread. The next morning I didn t go into the field by stood at the gate behind our house. When Mr. Orchard saw he and he saw I wasn't bringing the bread to him and his family, he must have decided that if they were going to get it they would have to come for it.

That was quite a performance. Mr. Orchard didn't walk the last hundred feet. He pranced, and sideways, too. All the way he kept sticking his neck out first at his wife and over her back. This is the way geese tell their wives not to worry, that everything is alright. Then he would stick his head down near his youngsters and "unk, unk, unk" at them. All the while, he was leading them right up to me at the gate.

Finally they got there. Mr. Orchard came right up to the gate and took the pieces of bread from my hand. I dropped crumbs on the ground for the youngsters and they ate it. The were not afraid because they were with their parents and their parents were not using the sounds that tell the youngster to be afraid. Mrs. Orchard stayed on the side of the youngsters away from me. This way, she was on one side of her children and Mrs. Orchard was on the other side. They could feel as though they were protecting the goslings.

The next day I wasn't home and my wife did the feeding. It was just like the day before except for one thing. Mr. Orchard keept talking to Mrs. Orchard, using the sounds that confort geese. Before my wife had finished feeding, Mrs. Orchard took the big step. She came right up to my wife and took the bread from her hands.

The following day, both parents brought the flock up, but neither parent ate. They kept "unk,unk, unking" at the gs goslings. My wife, who was feeding, held the bread down low to the ground. The goslings walked right up and ate it from her hand. My wife made her hand into a cup and broke the bread into crumbs so the little ones could eat it better.

In no time at all, the little ones were leading the parents tothat same spot at the gate, chattering as they ran. If we didn't see them, the parents son made their "Honk" call and either my wife or I would go out and feed them. From the time the goslings first ate from our hands until they were half grown, Mr. and Mrs. Orchard never came up to the gate while the goslings were eating. When we learned the parents were not going to eat we tried to feed them by themselves. We would htrow pieces of bread too large for the goslings a short distance away from the gate. But the Orchards never once ate. They just guarded the youngsters. Only when the ypungsters had lmaost grown up did the parents eat from out hands again, Then they waited until the youngster had eated all they wanted.

After the goslings ate what they wanted, the parents led them to the pond for a drink.

Waterfowl are born with unusually small wings. Their wings grow more slowly than those of birds or chickens. But as their wings grow, the feathers all over their bodies grow. Until their backs are completely covered with a tight coat of feathers, the parents fold the children under their wings every time it rains hard. Again by instinnt, the parents know that until the youngsters are fully feathered over the small of the back, they can drown in a rainstorm. This may seem ~~like an~~ odd ~~thing~~, and perhaps it is. Especially because the little ones, when they are hardly more than tiny balls of fluff, can safely go in swimming. I think it is because Natures wants the young ones to stay with their parents longer. This way the parents can not only protect them, but they call also teach the goslings what the goslings must know to take care of themselves The small of the back is the last part of their bodies to get a full suit of feathers. At about that time, the wings are fully grown and are strong enough for flying.

When this time came, Mr. and Mrs. Orchard Honker ~~xx~~ for the first time ate with their flock. All of them ate at the same time.

But my surprize for the boys was for the goslings to eat from the boys' hands

Later the day the goslings were hatched I had a job to do that I just hate to do. I knew it had to be done. I knew that if I didn't do it, I would be even more sorry. But I hated to do it. There are often times in our lives when we have to force ourselves to do something we really dont want to do. We do these things because we know they have to be done. But we are not happy about doing them.

I had to fix the young so they could not fly away when they grew up. If I did it when they were only a day old, it didn't hurt them. But I knew that nature intended these geese to fly away on their powerful wings. When they were full grown they would fly south in the ~~spz~~ winter and north in the spring. They fly in large flocks. Maybe you have seen them in their large formations, ~~shpeted~~ shaped like a "V". Often you can hear them honking before you see them. Most people enjoy the sight. Some ~~people~~ think thet when the geese fly south the cold weather of winter is coming soon. They also believe that when the geese go north, ~~between~~ better weather is near.

If you stop and think about this you can undsr~~st~~and why people have these beliefs. In cold weather, the more to the north you are, the colder it is. The more to the south, the warmer it is. This means that the food the geese can

away as nearthe North Pole, the geese make teir their annual trip to the far sough of our country. This is called "migration". Other birds do the same thing. All those who do this are called "migratory birds". There are special laws passed by Cingress to protect migratory birds, People may not even own migratory birds until the government is satisfied they are able to take proper care of the birds and are the kind of people who will do so.

People think the geese begin their annual trip either because the food is short or because way up north it has already gotten cold.

Instinct is what would make these geese fly away if they could fly. As soon as a flock flew over, instinct would tell my ge se to join the flying flock. Once this happened, they would be wild geese for real again. The only way to stop this is to make it impossible for the geese to fly.

When they are just born, as I have said, their wings are very, very small. Their bones as so soft that some of them dont even feel like bones. At that time, it is possible to cut off the last tiny joint of one wing on a gosling with so little effect that hardly a drop of blood shows. When the gosling is full grown after the tip has been snipped off, if it tries to fly it is off balance and cannot fly. This simple operation has no other affect on the gosling or on the

goose the gosling gets to be.

Somehow, deep inside, I just dont want to keep the geese from their majestic flights from one end of the country to the other. Perhaps I envy them and dont know it. Then I think of the people who want some of these geese, to keep near their homes as friends, people who wil take good care of the geese and make them happy. So I go ahead and do the job, torn between the two feeling, that I should do it and that I should not do it.

Doing the cutting is no problem. The only problem is keeping the parents from hurting themselves. I bind their legs so they cannot walk. Of course, if I didn't tie them up, they would hurt me, so I have to tie them up. But if I lay them on the ground again after I tie them, they will still try and fight me, even if they cannot use their legs. They will use their wings, beating on the ground. They can move themselves this way, eben when they cannot use their legs.

This means I must have some one to help me. What I ~~do is~~ did to first was capture Mr. Orchard and tie his legs. Then I place him under my wife's arm, in such a way that her arm ~~bins~~ bound his wings ~~and~~ so he ~~can~~ could not use them. She hold his legs in her hand. Then we ~~do~~ did the same thing with Mrs. Orchard.

With the parents out of the way, I caught each gosling and carefully snipped off the single wing-tip. Before putting it back on the ground, I also punched a

little hole in the web ebtween its toes. By this means I can tell which is which when they grow up. When they are full grown, they areso much alike that without markings, we can not tell one from anyother.

Of course, the Orchard Honkers didn't like this at all. They protested loudly and tried to get away from my wife. When I had tended to the last gosling I took Mr. Honker from my wife. I got hold of both of his wings, by the end, and let him hang that way. He was so strong it was all I got do to keep my grip on him. As rapidly as I could I untied his legs and put him on the ground. He was, as you might guess, hissing and honking mightily, and he was trying to bite me. But the minute his feet touched the ground he ran to his babies and tlakad talked to them.as he ran, as though to tell them not to worry, he was back, and nothing would happen to them. The hid behind him. He spread his wings for them to hide under and turned and faced me. He kept on hissing and made out he was going to attack me. But this was just to scare me. He never left the goslings, although I thought he might try and "save" Mrs. Orchard.

As rapidly as I could, I did the same thing with Mrs. Orchard. She ran to her husband, and they made a great fuss over each other and then over the babies. My wife and I left them alone and went back to our house.

The geese forgave me for butting in and handling their young beforenthe day was over. I dont know whether their trust in me had returned or they were just hungry for bread. Whichever it was, before dark the entire family was at the gate, ~~begg~~ The parents begged to be fed.

That did it. In was "in". There was no doubt that Ralph and David would have their surprize when they got here.

My wife and I broke any number of slices of bread up for them. We gave the little ones crumbs and the parents pieces about the size of a nickle. The parents gobbled their up but the young ones really only played with the crumbs. They were not hungry. But they had learned where to be fed. Like most other animals, geese are pretty smart when it comes to food. They can always find their way back to a place where they ate.

LEONARD HICKS, JR.

HOTEL REPRESENTATIVES

THE ASSOCIATIONS BUILDING • 1145 - 19TH ST., N.W. • WASHINGTON 6, D.C. • TELETYPE: WA 279 • TELEPHONE: EXECUTIVE 3-6481

CONVENTION INFORMATION

Atlanta Chicago Detroit Miami New York Toronto Washington DC Los Angeles San Francisco

"Will they bite us?" "Can they fly away?" "How can we tell which are the boys and which are the girls?" "When will the babies be born?" "What do they eat?" "Can they see at night?"

The children were full of questions. Most of them were children from the city. Only a few had ever been on a farm before, and none had ever been on a real goose farm. This was their first visit to the farm named "The Golden Cockerel", where they were going to see for themselves the whole life story of a family of "wild geese". These are the same geese hunters shoot for sport and food. Their proper name is "Canadian Geese", and they are also known as "honkers" because of the sounds they make.

On this particular farm the wild geese were quite tame. They had learned the farmer was their friend and that he fed and looked after them.